

Message Text

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POUCHED INFO ALL CONSULATES IN CANADA

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: OGEN, CA
SUBJ: MEDIA REACTION PRIME MINISTED TRUDEAU'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON

REF: OTTAWA 00675

1. MEDIA COVERAGE OF PRIME MINISTER'S ARRIVAL AND TOASTS
AT WHITE HOUSE DINNER HAS BEEN HEAVY IN BOTH PRINE AND
ELECTRONIC MEDIA. PRIMARY INTEREST, HOWEVER, HAS
FOCUSED ON CTV'S TELEVISION INTERVIEW WITH PRESIDENT
CARTER BY BRUCE PHILLIPS.

2. CTV GAVE INTERVIEW HEAVY PUBLICITY EVENING OF
FEBRUARY 21ST AND CARRIED EXCERPTS ON LATE EVENING
NATIONAL NEWS. FULL INTERVIEW WAS CARRIED ON CANADA AM,
THE CANADIAN EQUIVALENT OF THE TODAY PROGRAM, EARLY
MORNING FEBRUARY 22. CTV HAS DESCRIBED THE INTERVIEW
AS THE FIRST GIVEN TO A CANADIAN JOURNALIST BY AN
AMERICAN PRESIDENT AND GAVE HEAVY PROMINENCE TO THE
PRESIDENT'S REMARKS CONCERNING QUEBEC. PHILLIPS
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DESCRIBED THE INTERVIEW ON CANADA AM THIS MORNING AS
"A REAL BREEZE BECAUSE FIRST OF ALL, THE PRESIDENT
KNEW EXACTLY WHAT HE WANTED TO SAY AND SECONDLY HE
IS A VERY EASY PERSON TO INTERVIEW." PHILLIPS
REPORTED THAT THE PRESIDENT IS A VERY RELAXED MAN
DESPITE BEING SO BUSY AND WAS IN TOTAL COMMAND.
PHILLIPS SAID THAT WHEN THEY CAME TO THE ISSUE THEY

WANTED TO DISCUSS A QUEBEC - THE PRSIDENT DIDN'T WANT TO BE PUT IN THE POSITION OF VOLUNTEERING INFORMATION BUT "HE KNEW WHAT HE DID WANT TO SAY. HE HAD SOMETHING IN THERE THAT HE WANTED TO GET OUT - IT WAS ALMOST AS IF HE WAS SAYING 'TAKE MY HAND MR., PHILKLIPS AND I WILL SHOW WHERE WE ARE BOTH GOING.' WHAT HE WANTED TO SAY IS THAT HE HAS A PERSONAL STRONG CONVICTION ABOUT FEDERATION BUT THAT HE COULD ONLY GO SO FAR WITH IT BECAUSE IT IS, AS HE SAID, A DOMESTIC CANADIAN PROBLEM. WHAT THE PRSIDENT HAS DONE HERE, OF COURSE, IS TO PUT HIMSELF SQUARELY ON ONE SIDE OF A BIG, HOT CANADIAN POLITICAL ISSUE WHICH IS SEPARATISM. HE SAYS HE'S FOR CONFEDERATION AND THE INFERENCE THAT MEANS IS THAT THAT IS NOW THE PRONOUNCED OFFICIAL POLICY OF THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT. THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES IS AGAINST QUEBEC SEPARATISM. I DON'T KNOW WHAT EFFECT THAT IS LIKELY TO HAVE ON THE SEPARATIST MOVEMENT IN QUEBEC CITY MR. TRUDEAU WITH WHOM ALLEGEDLY THE SUBJECT HAS NOT YET BEEN DISCUSSED WILL FIND A MIGHTY ALLY IN HAVING THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES SAY THAT. I THINK IT MEANS ALSO THAT THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES IS USING WHATEVER WAYS ARE OPEN TO HIM. IT'S A LITTLE DIFFICULT TO SEE AT THIS STAGE OF THE GAME JUST WHAT THOSE WAYS WILL BE BUT, IN WHATEVER WAY HE CAN, HE WILL HELP THE FORCES OF CANADA WHO ARE IN FAVOR IN KEEPING CONFEDERATION TOGETHER."

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EM PHILLIPS WENT ON TO SAY THAT THE AVERAGE VOTER IN QUEBEC WILL THINK TWICE ABOUT VOTING FOR SEPARATION IF IT IS CLEAR THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES IS AGAINST IT AND THAT U.S. POLICY COULD BE INJURIOUS TO A SEPARATE STATE OF QUEBEC. PHILLIPS SAID THE INTERVIEW WITH THE PRESIDENT WAS A "BIG THING" AND THAT IT IS THE "FIRST TIME THAT A PRSIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES WITHOUT REALLY HESITATING HAS INTERVENED DIRECTLY AND FORCEFULLY IN A MAJOR CANADIAN PROBLEM. THERE'S A WHOLE LOT DOWN THE ROAD AHEAD ON THIS ONE. I THINK IT WAS AN EXTRAORDINARY INTERVIEW, A HISTORIC INTERVIEW FOR THE PRESIDENT TO DO THAT."

4. SPEAKING FOR THE PARTI QUEBECOIS ON THE SAME PROGRAM (CANADA AML MR. PIERRE DEBELVOIE, A MEMBER OF THE QUEBEC ASSEMBLY, SAID THAT THE PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT CAME ONLY AFTER A GREAT DEAL OF PROMPTING BY BRUCE PHILLIPS. MR. PIERRE DEBELVOIE SAID THAT THE PRESIDENT EMPHASIZED THAT THESE DECISIONS WERE FOR

CANADIANS TO MAKE. HE NOTED THAT THE PRESIDENT COMMENTED THAT CANADIANS WERE WELL ABLE TO TAKE CARE OF THEIR INTERNAL POLITICAL PROBLEMS. HE SAID THAT BARUCE PHILLIPS KEPT TRYING TO PUT WORDS INTO HIS (PRESIDENT CARTER'S) MOUTH. IN ANSWER TO A STATEMENT BY THE INTERVIEWER THAT THE PRESIDENT DOES NOT EXPECT SEPARATION TO OCCUR, LMR. PIREER DEBELVOIE SAID THAT IT MIGHT APPEAR TO BE THAT WAY FROM A WASHINGTON PERSPECTIVE BUT THAT THE PRESIDENT MAY NOT BE INFORMED ABOUT THE FEELING OF THE QUEBEC PEOPLE. "IT MAY BE THAT HIS INTELLIGENCE SERVICES ARE NO MORE ACCURATE ABOUT THAT THAN THEY HAVE BEEN ABOUT MANY THINGS." IN ANSWER TO A QUESTION ASKING WHAT P.Q. REACTION WOULD BE IF THE PRESIDENT WAS SO DIRECT AS TO SAY THAT THE SEPARATISTS WERE ALL WRONG, MR. PIERRE DEBELVOIE SAID: "IF HE MADE THAT STATEMENT WE WOULD CHUCKLE, IT WOULD BE WATER TO OUR MILL. IT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WOULD ATTRACT WORLD ATTENTION TO WHAT IS HAPPENING IN QUEBEC AND WE LIKE THAT SORT OF THING."

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5. ANSWERING A QUESTION ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF AMERICAN GOODWILL AND UNDERSTANDING OF GOALS AND

IDEALS OF THE P.Q., MR. PIERRE DEBELVOIE SAID THAT RENE LEVESQUE WENT TO NEW YORK TO SPEAK TO THE ECONOMIC CLUB THERE "BECAUSE WE DO WANT TO HAVE THE MOST FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH THE U.S.. OUR TOP FOREIGN POLICY OBJECTIVE IS CLOSE ASSOCIATION WITH CANADA AND RIGHT AFTER THAT IS EXCELLENT RELATIONS WITH THE U.S."

6. OTHER MEDIA COMMENT ON THE PHILLIPS'

INTERVIEW WAS MUCH MORE RESTRAINED THAN CTV'S ANALYSIS. SOUTHAM NEWS SERVICES REPORTED THAT :PRESIDENT JIMMY CARTER HAS PUT THE UNITED STATES FIRMLY ON THE RECORD AS BEING AGAINST ANY BREAKUP OF CANADIAN CONFEDERATION BUT EMPHASIZED THAT CANADIANS "MUST MAKE THEIR OWN DECISIONS ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THEIR COUNTRY. SOUTHAM NEWS REPORTED: "THE PRESIDENT SAID BREAKUP OF CANADA WOULD BE OF CRUCIAL IMPORTANCE TO THE U.S. BUT STRESSED THAT HE WAS CONFIDENT THAT QUEBEC WOULD CHOOSE TO REMAIN IN CANADA." THE REPORT WENT ON TO SAY THAT "THROUGHOUT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THE INTERVIEW CARTER WAS OBVIOUSLY BEING EXTREMELY CAREFUL TO AVOID SAYING ANYTHING THAT MIGHT BE INTERPRETED AS INTERFERENCE IN CANADIAN AFFAIRS."

COMMENT: PHILLIPS AND CTV ARE OBVIOUSLY MAKING ALL THEY CAN OUT OF THE INTERVIEW AND BALLYHOOED THE PROGRAM TO THE MAXIMUM. HOWEVER, THE PHILLIPS' INTERPRETATION THAT THE PRESIDENT WAS DIRECTLY INTERFERING IN CANADIAN AFFAIRS IN A CALCULATED WAY TO INFLUENCE EVENTS IN QUEBEC WAS NOT SHARED BY OTHER COMMENTATORS. MOST POINT OUT THAT THE PRESIDENT SCRUPULOUSLY AVOIDED ANYTHING THAT WOULD BE INTERPRETED AS INTERFERENCE IN CANADIAN AFFAIRS AND THAT HE WAS RESPONDING TO A SERIES OF QUESTIONS INTENDING TO DRAW OUT HIS VIEWS ON THIS MAJOR ISSUE AND THAT HE DID NOT INITIATE THE DISCUSSION ON THE POSSIBILITY OF QUEBEC SEPARATION. DUEMLING

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